LANGUAGE LOSS AND PENTECOSTALISM:
THE YUCATEC MAYA
OF SAN ANTONIO, BELIZE, CAYO DISTRICT[1]

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Abstract: Analysis of culture loss due to the Pentecostal church in a Maya community in Belize. Ethnic groups of Belize. Influence of the Yucatan Caste War in the foundation of the town of San Antonio and in the San Antonio District. Languages spoken in this region and the loss of the Yucatec Maya language. Division between pentecostalists and catholics. Analysis of communication structures that prove the loss of the Yucatec Maya language in west Belize.
Key words: Globalization, identity, Yucatec Maya culture, culture loss.

INTRODUCTION

In times of globalization, rise of network society, and increasing pressure on smaller societies much ink has been spilled on the topic of the loss of local identites, especially indigenous ones. Arjun Appadurai (1996) has argued for a dialectical process of globalization, whereby powerful and seemingly less powerful actors interchange and influence each other. Globalization is this sense is described as a dialectical process in which both sides take profit. Manuel Castells (2004) has eloquently described globalization as the rise of the information age. Castells, as Appadurai, shows how global flows increase in importance and take precedence over the flows of power emanating from nation states, albeit the nation state stays an important actor in the global world. Different from Appadurai, Castells describes the process of globalization as an interchange of global agents and resistance communities that are being built in response to flows of globalization processes. In Castell's view these resistance communities are built around fundamental identities often based upon religion or territory that are not reconcible with other identites. Examples of such identites are Al Quaeda or the American Militia that react against global influences on both local religion and territory. While Appadurai shows a dynamic process in one direction, Castells implies a dynamic process in many directions and directed against each other. Both theories imply the strengthening or at least very active participation of local actors in global processes and also to a degree the maintenance of specific cultural features connected with territory or religion. In postmodern writings aided by Michel Foucault's concept of power it has become en mode to write about local agents, about agency and power of the underpriviledged, about the weapons of the weak (Scott 1985). Writing about culture loss is nowadays viewed as underestimating the agency of the poor.

In this article I will write about culture loss, I will outline how Yucatec culture and language is profoundly influenced by changes in religion in a Yucatec community in the state of Belize. I will try to show how the evangelical denomination of the Pentecostal church had profound impact upon the communication in a village and how culture and language are affected by this impact. On the contrary to other scholars this article sees little evidence that something unique is created in the place of Yucatec culture and language. Rather a way of life is adapted according to the doctrines of the churches as set up in the United States and thus an equal and indistinguishable life from other communities is established. Actually the indistinguishabilty is one of the major goals of Pentecostal churches today. I see very little unique contribution on the side of the villagers. Contrary to leftist opinions, however, I do not see the villagers as victims of these developents, but they rather choose to become Pentecostals consciously and applaud the breakdown of centuries of tradition.

This, however, does not mean that in all cases Pentecostal denominations influence indigenous societies in the way described here. In many cases language and certain cultural traits are maintained in spite or even because of the Pentecostal denominations. I will try to outline, that the specific case of the Belize Nation State has positively influenced the rise of Pentecostalism and its politics are responsible for the dissipation of indigenous language and culture. This is very different from neighboring states Mexico and Guatemala.

BELIZE AS A NATION

Belize as a nation is a unique construction within Latin America (including the Caribbean), because of its composition of creole and indigenous groups under English rule in a Spanish speaking general environment (Wilk & Chapin 1992: 177). About 40% of the population are Creoles, about 43% are Mestizos and Mayas (10%), that are often regarded as the same group by the Creols. The Maya groups consist of 3% K'ekchi and 7% Mopan and Yucatec Maya, with no exact percentage of the Yucatec Maya known. Another 7% of the population are the Garífuna from the lower Antilles (Wilk & Chapin 1992: 145). The rest of the population consists of highly diversified East Indians, Chinese, German Mennonites, and Americans and Europeans. Initially these groups were also spatially separated, due to labour segmentation (Bolland 2003: 206). The British settlers of the 19th century controlling wealth and power called themselves the prinicpal inhabitants of Belize, mainly establishing slave based plantations and mahogany extraction companies, based in and around Belize City. The Garífuna coming from the island of St. Vincent mainly settled in the Stann Creek District. In the second half of the century the Maya settled in the northern and western regions of Belize, refugees from the Caste War. The Mopan and K'ekchi came to Belize in the late 19th century and settled in a very remote part of the Toledo district. All groups had little or no contact with Creole and Garífuna. These groups coincided until the mid 20th century with religion, the Creole protestants, the Garífuna catholics, the Maya and Mestizos catholics, the Mopan and K'ekchi retaining more traditional religious elements. In recent years, however, there is a significant increase in mixture between these different groups (Bolland 2003: 208ff.). While racial categories are often used to rigidly define certain groups, cultural boundaries are crossed. Large portions of the population speak Belizean Creole without identifying themselves as Creole. The Catholic Church has succeeded to convert many traditionally protestant groups, such as

poritions of the Creols. The protestant religion has declined, while fundamental evangelical religions are rising among all groups, especially the Mestizos and several Maya groups. In recent times increased migration from Guatemala and El Salvador due to the wars has shifted group relations, whereby the Creols find themselves outnumbered by Mestizos. In the words of many villagers of San Antonio they are today *rice & beans*.

However, after reaching independence no group in the country has taken the dominant role of the British, neither the Creole, nor the Mestizos, nor any other group, although some goups may well fear that the other group might soon (Bolland 2003: 220). Because of this balanced diversity within the small country of Belize official statements of identities produce slogans like *Pluralism is our National Identity*. In fact, the political parties of Belize are not ethnically dominated. Participations in political parties often cross cuts rather than reinforces ethnic identites (Bolland 2003: 211). This is one of the reasons why ethnicity never became a political issue (Bolland 2003: 213). All political parties had to seek supporters among all ethnical groups in Belize and never could afford to be supported by only one group (Bolland 2003: 216). The voting habits in Belize defy any simple explanation of racial or ethnic, even rural or urban affiliation to one party (Bolland 2003: 214f.). Instead of promoting ethnic boundaries, the political parties in Belize actively try to draw votes from all groups. Ethnic self–awareness is consciously not politicized in Belize because of the need to win elections. In this depoliticized environment movements to further ethnic self–awareness of groups are less successful because they hardly find any national basis or opposition. Therefore the ethnicity of the various Maya groups is less politicized than in Mexico and cannot be instrumentalized easily for political purposes.

However, there are certain political representations of ethnic minorities that play an important role on national level. Known organisations are the Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC), an organization of Mopan and K'ekchi Maya, the National Garífuna Council (NGC), and the United Black Association for Development (UBAD). Of special interest here is the TMCC which is an organization of K'ekchi and Mopan Maya against the increasing infiltration of missionaries and government officials and promotes an ethnic awareness among the Maya groups. Mostly the TMCC is concerned about the future of land and reservations of the K'ekchi and Mopan Maya communities (Wilk 1991). Such political organization have requested needs of indigenous communities, but have not lead to become political parties competing for power in the public domain at the national level (Bolland 2003: 219). The Yucatec Maya have no organization like the TMCC, only an informal society called *Kuxtal Masewal*. This organisation consists mostly of intellectual Yucatec speakers from the northern regions, Bullet Tree and San Antonio and is mainly concerned with smaller publications (Tzul 1993), rather than dances and fiestas, dismissing these as shows. Overall the Maya organisations have not lead to any political claims, notwithstanding to any common Maya identity in Belize. Especially the Yucatec Maya are not apparent on the national scheme (Stone 2000), as if they have been assimilated totally. Even ethnographers working in the Cayo district are not aware of the Yucatec, regard their language as extinct in Belize and believe San Antonio to be populated by Mopan (Chiteji 2000: 83f.; 106). This little appearance on the national scheme can be attributed to the general national politics that did not and do not politicize ethnicity and thus make it unnecessary for ethnic groups to defend their identities. The exact reason for the fast assimilation of the Yucatec Maya in Belize will have to await further publication (Colas n.d.) but one of the reasons, according ot Bolland (2003: 206) may have been that they held a well integrated economic status within the northern and western districts, while the K'ek-

chi and Mopan maintained a stronger sense of identity and traditions in language, dress, and religion due to their isolation (Bolland 2003: 206; see also Thompson 1930; Howard 1975a; 1975b).

THE YUCATEC MAYA IN BELIZE

The history of the Yucatec Maya in Belize is closely connected with the caste war in Yucatan, which was a peasant–indigenous movement against the Spanish rule. The movement started in 1847 in the east of the Yucatan peninsula and progressed slowly to the west in the direction of Merida but was repelled in subsequent years by Mexican forces to the east (Dumond 1997). In the following years a bitter Guerilla war developed, that fractioned the Maya forces considerably. One the one hand there were the fierce warriors of Chan Santa Cruz that continuously battled against Spanish rule on the Yucatan peninsula. One the other hand there were the pacíficos that tried to reach a peace treaty with the Spanish to escape the war. The pacíficos were, however, subsequently regarded as enemies by the Chan Santa Cruz Maya and engaged in battles with them. Due to this situation a large group fled into the British colony Honduras and settled in villages around San Pedro (Jones 1997: 141ff.). After quarrels with British officials (Bolland 1977) and an odyssee through Guatemala most of the Maya settled in the northern regions and some founded the village of San Antonio in the Cayo district (Jones 1977: 168; Tzul 1993). Their expulsion from Mexico by their own people probably created a traumatic experience which led to the loss of much of a historical memory among the Yucatec Maya of Belize (Colas n.d.).

The Yucatec Maya in the northern and western regions undertook hardly any traditional rituals after 1930 (Smailus 1974; 1976) and also the Yucatec language was used less (Brockmann 1977: 249); today there are only a few speakers in the northern regions (visits of author to Xaibe 2003). Not so in San Antonio, where Yucatec Maya is still very alive, although assimilation processes are starting there as well. Evangelical churches have converted most catholics and banned all ritual activites (Smailus 1974; 1976: 217). The investigation of the current situation of Yucatec Maya and its future development are tasks of the current paper.

The few investigations about the Yucatec Maya of Belize can be divided roughly into ethnographic and linguistic studies, the latter being the majority. Most of the linguistic studies devote attention to the language change in contact situation with Spanish and Engish in northern Belize (Smailus 1975; Koenig 1980; Bolle 2001). Ethnographic studies often devote attention to the K'ekchi and Mopan Maya (Howard 1975a; 1975b; Wilk und Chapin 1992). The classic study of J. Eric Thompson (1930) devotes attention to the Yucatec Maya of Succotz and the K'ekchi Maya of Toledo, is however, outdated today. Modern ethnographic studies about the Yucatec Maya are only referring to a few aspects, such as Brockmann (1977) who investigated the relations of the different ethnic groups in the northern regions or the study of Jantzen (1985) who investigated the relations of the Yucatec to the Mennonites and finally a study by Brockmann (1985) about fiestas in the northern regions. The studies often are not based on long field research (often less than a month) and do not explicitly lay open their research methods. The studies of Smailus (1974; 1975; 1976) are the only ones that explicitly deal with San Antonio in the Cayo district. Smailus investigated Yucatecan cuentos and recorded them in the early 1970s. An ethnographic study about the Yucatec Maya of Belize based upon a long field research period is therefore virutally non existent and fills a gap in the scholarly production.

SAN ANTONIO, CAYO DISTRICT

San Antonio was founded in 1876 by Yucatecan refugee groups at the foothill of the rising Pine Ridge and Maya mountains (see Map 1). Currently (October 2006) there are 1760 people living within the defined boundaries of San Antonio village, from the dwelling of Sak Tunich midway between Cristo Rey and San Antonio to the crossing at the Caracol road.

THE LOSS OF YUCATEC MAYA

In the village a wide variety of languages is being spoken and almost all villagers speak two or three languages. Discourse in the village is mainly conducted through Spanish and Yucatec Maya and to a certain degree though English and Creole, which is the main discourse language in the schools and colleges. 156 people speak English or Creole as main languages, two languages that were not distinguished for the purpose of this study. The majority of people (975) speak Spanish as main language, although this group mainly consists of children. 602 people speak Yucatec Maya as main language. Four people indicated to speak Mopan Maya as main language. For several other people the main language could not be determined.

This study tried to distinguish between a main language that was spoken and second languages. The competence in a language was divided into three rough categories. The first of them being *speak*, which referred to the overall ability to carry on conversations in the particular language and to use this language as main language in daily discourse. The second category was *understand*, referring to the ability to understand conversations in a particular language and be able to occasionally answer in that language but using another language for daily discourse. The category *nothing* relates to people not being able to understand and This assumption is backed by my general participant observation and by specific interviews conducted, of which only one shall be exhibited here. The interview conducted related to changes in life in San Antonio and was conducted with a male who had lived all his life in San Antonio and is a native speaker of Yucatec. Regarding what had changed one of his answers was:

Map 1: Belize and Location of San Antonio
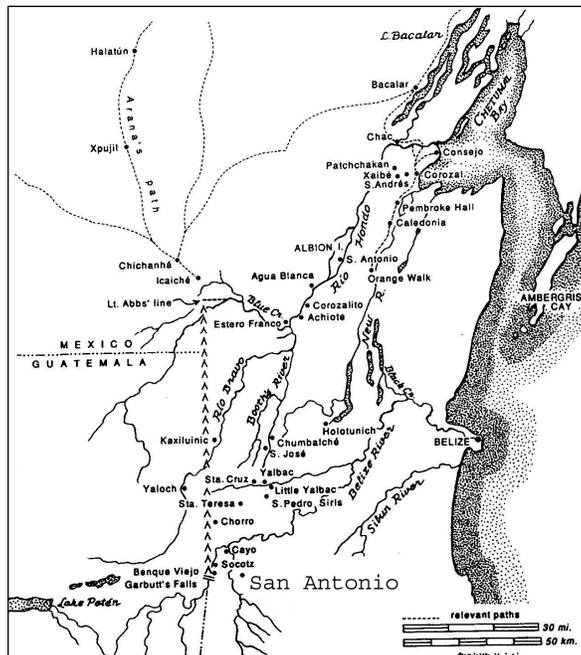
Source: Dumond 1997: 333

follow conversation. This, however, does not pertain to the ability to understand single lexemes in any language. Charts 1a–1e indicate the competence in Yucatec Maya by ages. The charts indicate a clear tendency towards the loss of Yucatec Maya. While more than 90% of the people born before 1946 speak Maya, less than 10% of the children born after 1995 still speak Maya. The possibilty exists, that children generally start speaking Maya at a later age (which would have to be tested in a re–study). However, some households are still purely Maya speaking, which contradicts this general assumption. Therefore, it can be said, that it is very likely that Yucatec Maya is in a general process of dissipation.
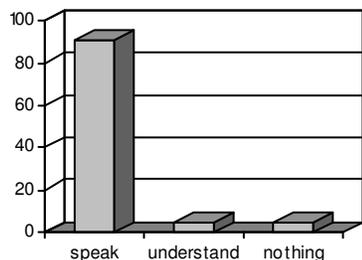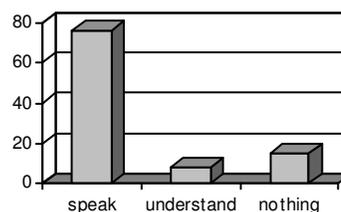
Chart 1a: 77 speakers born
before 1946

Chart 1b: 269 speakers born
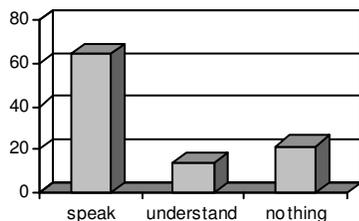between 1946–1970

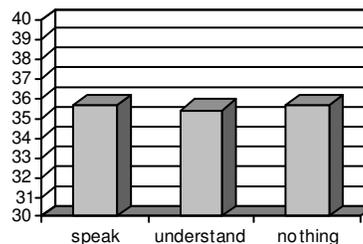Chart 1c: 370 speakers born
between 1971–1985

Chart 1d: 369 speakers born
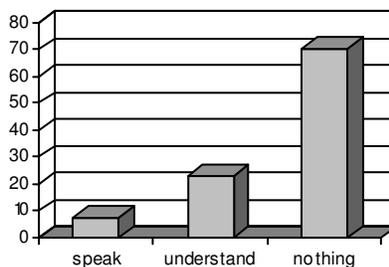between 1986–1995

Chart 1e: 482 people born between 1996 and 2007

N.K., male, * 1974

Kachile chen Maya, tu'ux aka bine chen Maya tak ichil leescuelao, puro Maya. Beele lepaalaloobo ku binoob leescuelao puro español ku t'anoob chen hunt'ul ku t'an Maya. Elelo tz'ok u cambiar yaaba, nohoch.

<Before [they spoke] only Maya, whereever you went, only Maya, even in school, only Maya. Today, the children that go to school, only Spanish they speak, only a few still speak Maya that changed a lot , a lot.>

This section of the interview shows that the change in language competence is also an emic view of the villagers and not only the result of etic tabulations. However, equally many people answered that they thought in school Yucatec Maya was predominant, which was negated to me by all the teachers of the school. Many people are therefore also ignorant of the loss of Yucatec Maya, and their own past reflects their vision of the present. However, the loss of Yucatec Maya is a highly likely scenario in San Antonio.

In search for the reasons of the dissipation of Yucatec Maya the most common answer was that today people are ashamed to speak in Maya, as the following section of an interview shows.

D.Z., female, * 1978

Beele lepalaloobo ku ch'ijloob ma tak u kankoob, sulak ku t'anoob

<Today the children that grow up to not learn anymore [Maya], they are ashamed to speak [Maya].>

This however reflects the people's own interpretation of the process observed not any specific attitudes towards language. In fact, all people that analysed the situation in that way added that such a feeling towards the language is absurd. Neither of the languages spoken in the village is definitely connected with a certain set of either positive or negative values, rather their spatial occurrence is commented upon. The overwhelming majority of people are of the opinion that Yucatec Maya should be learned and spoken at home, English in school, and Spanish on the street. The observed practices show, however, that Spanish is predominantly spoken at home and not Yucatec Maya. It seems a too simple explanation to equate Yucatec Maya with negative values while it is seen as the most important language to be spoken within a household. In my view a much more complex process is responsible for the dissipation of Yucatec Maya than a theory seeking to explain the phenomenon by associating the indigenous language with a set of negative values. Another argument seeks to explain the dissipation of Yucatec Maya by the fact that schools teach English nowadays which invades households and slowly replaces Maya. Charts 2a and 2b show the competence in Yucatec Maya of people (mostly children) whose first language is Spanish and English. As can be observed, less than 10% of the children raised predominantly in Spanish still speak Yucatec Maya and use it in discourse, while more than 25% of the children raised in English also use Maya for their daily discourse. This leads to the conclusion that Spanish is replacing Yucatec Maya as the daily discourse language rather than English.

Currently there still is not a good explanation why people of San Antonio shifted to speaking Spanish as opposed to the K'ekchi and Mopan in the Toledo District that speak English. Possible explanations are the proximity to the twin towns of Cayo which are predominantly Spanish speaking. Since San Antonio farmers increasingly relied on cash crops
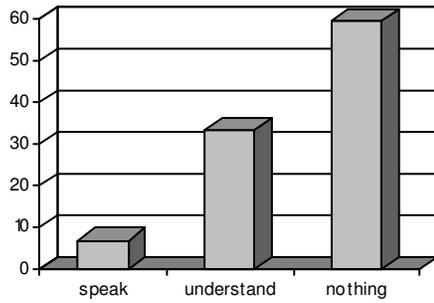
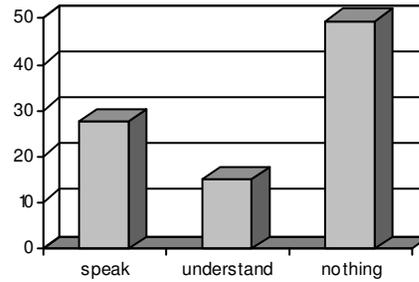Chart 2a: Yucatec competence of
887 peope raised in Spanish

Chart 2b: Yucatec competence of
159 people raised in English

since the 1960s a necessity evolved to communicate with people in Cayo and therefore to learn Spanish. As Orwin Smailus (pers. communication 2003) pointed out, ethnically the Maya of San Antonio felt much closer to the Mestizos of the Cayo District than to the Creole of the Belize District which further enhanced the likelihood of learning Spanish as opposed to English. This question, however, is far from resolved.

Another possible eplanation for the dissipation of Yucatec Maya may be seeked in the religious affiliation of the people. San Antonio is characterized by a variety of churches in its village. 1099 count themsleves as belonging to six different Pentecostal denominations, called Rey de Paz (302), Rey de Reyes (209), Fuente de Agua Viva (106), Familia de Dios (95), Cristo Vive (245) and Alpha y Omega (67), 318 people are catholics, and 66 people visit the Jehova's witness church while 132 people do not at all go to church. The history of the Pentecostal churches is a relatively recent one. The first Pentecostal church was founded in 1962 by Lorenzo Tzib (Tzul 1993: 102ff.) but it was not until the late 1970s that a large number of people converted to Pentecostalism. Today about 70% of the people of San Antonio are members of a Pentecostal chruch. Based upon experiences from Quintana Roo (Ortwin Smailus, pers. communication 2003) it might be expected that members of the Catholic Church retain the indigenous language to a higher degree than
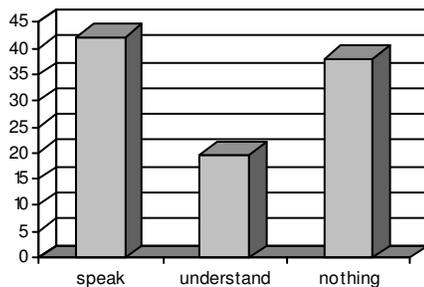

Chart 3a: Yucatec competence of
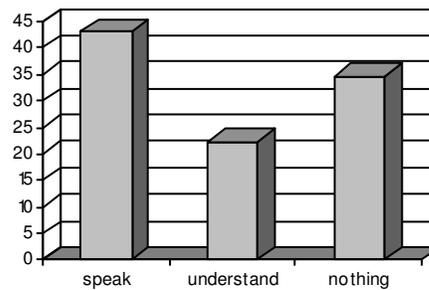1099 members of pentecostal
churches in San Antonio

Chart 3b: Yucatec competence of
318 members of the Catholic
Church in San Antonio

members of the Pentecostal denominations. As charts 3a and 3b show, there is hardly any difference within the Pentecostal and the Catholic churches regarding the competence in Yucatec Maya. In both types of churches more than 40% of the members still use Yucatec Maya in daily discourse more than 50% do not even understand it.

For the case of San Antonio it can therefore not be stated that the Pentecostal churches have a direct influence on language acquisition. Rarther, as I will try to show, the structure of communication is responsible for the dissipation of Yucatec.

BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNICATION

During the course of the interviews an especially deep divide has been detected between members of different denominations mainly between Pentecostals and Catholics. Each group accuses the other one of being responsible for a deep division within the village resulting in little communication between the different groups.

Mostly members of the Pentecostal denominations accuse Catholics of disrupting village life with drinking and fiestas, as will become clear in the following section of an interview.

> C. O., * 1932, pentecostal
> *Tene católicoen, per mix ba'al, hasta ken hok'oob maak peor yaan fiesta, kawa'ake tabin meet misao, ba'axi ken takeche, a kah kaltal, a kah ba'atel yetel awet winkiloob kalaanech, ilawile, ba'ax elelo ma ma'aloob, ma a k'abet. Leti beetke ma, pero hunt'ul maak cristiano, haste ken u kaxtej dioso ya ba'ax beyo tz'oki. Ya minaan maasi heelo. Ku tubultech*
> <I was catholic, but nothing, until people left [catholicism] bad fiestas were here, imagine, they went make a Mass, stuff like that when you come back, you become drunk, you fight with your own people you are drunk, you see, things like that are not good, you don't need it. He did it, but a Christian, when he found god, stuff like that ended. There is nothing of this. You forgot it.>

Catholics on the other hand often accuse Pentecostals of being outright bad people, as will become clear in this interview

> S. E., *1935, catholic
> *Yaaba maake borta huuuuuuuu religioso, pero ken hok'oob u lak ba'ax ku meetkoob mas maldad ku meetkoob que tech, y elelo hah*
> <Many people today are religious, but when they leave [church], they are doing something else; they do more bad things than you, and that is true.>

These accusations go along with social stigmatization that further divides the different groups. In the following section of an interview a Pentecostal is describing what he thinks of social practices of the Catholics.

> C. O., * 1932, pentecostal
> *Puro k'as kuya'alaloob letioob kisin kiotic, awohel ba'ax kisin. Leti helo, puro umeyajo kisino letihe ku meetnoobo.*

<Only bad things, one says .. this ...devil, you know what kisin is?
That is him, they only do the work of the devil, that is what they do.>

Describing the other ones as devils leaves a deep divide in the village, that is recognized by the other groups who themselves react accordingly.

L.L., * 1946, catholic
Ma chu gustarti ti ten, porque hach ... ya'akoob que maake kisin, ya'akoob bine que toone cuando toone ma chu bine iglesia utili uyiglesia, letioobo ya'akob que toone kisin, toone kisin ken xiikoon
<I do not like it [the pentecostal churches] very well, because ... they say that we are the devil, they say if we do not go to their church they say we are the devil, we will go to hell.>

All of this leads to a very limited communication within the village, as will become apparent from the next interview.

S. Z., * 1940, Testigos de Jehova
Pentecostese ma, ti a'alke o elelo mundanoki tene ma in t'an yetel, tene ma in tzikbaltik yetel, ma in biskuba yetel tumene letie' mundano, tene ma mundanoen, tene salvoenki
<Penetecostal no, he says this guy is worldly, he says, I do not talk with him, I do not converse with him, I do not deal with him because he is worldly, but I am not worldly, I have salvation, he says.>

The divide of having salvation or not having salvation cuts deep into the heart of the village causing villagers of different churches not to talk to each other anymore. This has a profound effect upon the structure of communication, as will be shown below.

STRUCTURE OF COMMUNICATION

In the course of the project a large communcation network analysis has been undertaken that has yet to be analyzed. Table 1 shows the methods of this ego–oriented communication network analysis. All names and connections are fictive no real communication relations are shown. The questions asked during this ego–oriented communication network analysis pertain to the Fischer questionnaire of ego–oriented networks (Jansen 2003: 84). The Fischer questionnaire was designed to investigate ego–oriented friendship relations. The questions pertain to communication about personal matters, religion, politics, from whom one would borrow money, who would be worthy of trust to take care of one's children and house, etc. These questions were asked at all 296 households interviewed.

As shown in table 1 the first row lists the number of households that were questioned. The second row lists the heads of the respective households. The first column lists the people indicated by the heads of the households as having communication with them. From table 1 it can immediately be seen that only Tzib has more than one contact. He is the major hub of communication.

A preliminary analysis of the communication network analysis reveals that contacts are restricted to three contacts at the most. These contacts are restricted either to the core

family or the church. Unfortunately a statistical analysis of these contacts is not available, but both family ties and ties of the church seem to cross cut each other. At this point it cannot be determined, whether the family affiliation or the church affiliation is stronger, something to be investigated in the future.

What can be determined however, are the five major hubs of communication, because they are the only ones with more than three contacts. The five major hubs in the Tab. 2: Five major communication hubs in San Antonio; fictive names village are five pastors of Pentecostal churches. Tab. 2 (with fictive names) lists the contacts of the pastors. As a very preliminary result is can be stated, that communication in the village is heavily influenced by the Pentecostal churches and there is little to no significant inter–parish communication in the village. Unfortunately the languages in which communication occurs have not been analyzed yet, also a task deferred for the future.

Tab.1: Example of ego–oriented communication network; names fictive

Household	1	2	3	4	5
Names	Uk	Pech	Kann	Mai	Cruz
Canto	yuk	–	–	–	–
Hau	–	span	–	–	–
Tzib	yuk	–	yuk	–	span
Mesh	–	–	–	yuk	–

Tab. 2: Five major communication hubs in San Antonio; names fictive

Name	Contacts
Uk	22
Pech	14
Canul	11
Ek	10
Chi	6

A few interesting observations shall be mentioned on the occasional inter–parish communication. In the following section a member of the church of Testigos de Jehova is describing his communication with one of the village's high officials, who attends the Pentecostal church, again with fictive names.

PRC: *Yetel Canul ich Español, aha baaxten, leti ku t'anik xan Maya*
<With Canul you speak in Spanish? Why, doesn't he speak Maya?>

B.L.: *Ma chu tzikbaltik Maya tinwetel*
<He does not speak with me in Maya>

PRC: *Leti mu pajtal tzikbal Maya? Si ku pajtal!*
<He cannot speak Maya? Yes he can!>

B.L.: *Ma, ma, ten kin t'anik Esapñol ku nukik*
<No, no. When I speak in Maya he answers in Spanish>

This section of the interview shows that in some cases inter–parish communication of two native Yucatec speakers occurs in Spanish. The conclusion deriving from this might be, that any inter–parish communication moves from the more familial Yucatec Maya to the more official Spanish and English and Yucatec is banned from official discourse in the village. While this certainly might be the case in many instances, I have observed abun-

dant inter–parish communication in Yucatec as well, however, mostly restricted to families. It can therefore be stated that official non–family–tied communication between native Yucatec speakers tends to be conducted more and more in Spanish rather than Maya, although this is not an exclusive pattern. However, this has an effect upon Yucatec as the official language spoken in the village.

Outside of San Antonio in all official and unofficial conversations either English or Spanish is used. If even inside the village Yucatec Maya is banned from official discourse, it looses much of its former significance, especially within the village as discourse language. Tied with the notion of a general breakdown of communication within the village Yucatec Maya is used less and also cannot serve as a general feature of identification for the Yucatec either.

CONCLUSIONS

The results presented here are of a very preliminary nature, because the ethnographic field work has just ended (July 2007). Many data await even preliminary analysis. The purpose of this paper has been to document the indigenous language loss in a Yucatec village in Belize and to propose a few preliminary ideas in the processes of this language dissipation.

The major argument presented here is that no single phenomenon causes the loss of Yucatec Maya directly also not the Pentecostal churches. Rather the churches influence the communication structure within the village in such a way, that Yucatec looses its significance as a daily discourse language and also in political matters. Yucatec is then used less and less and is increasingly abandoned by the villagers of San Antonio. However, the phenomenon of Pentecostalism is not restricted to Belize it can be observed in large parts of Mexico and Guatemala, to varying degrees. Thus the question arises, why the impact of Pentecostalism does not lead to language loss in many villages in Mexico, while its influence was so profound in San Antonio. In addition it may be added that neighboring villages such as Succotz were purely Yucatec villages a century ago (see Thompson 1930), which also includes Cristo Rey, Bullet Tree, Santa Familia, and Benque Viejo del Carmen. In all these villages traditional Yucatec traits are gone, including the language which is extinct today in every one of those villages except for San Antonio itself. Therefore, the loss of Yucatec culture and language is a regional wide phenomenon in western Belize that has to be explained in opposition to the K'ekchi and Mopan Maya that maintain their culture and language.

One of the answers can be sought in the cultural politics of the modern nation state Belize. As Nigel Bolland has shown (see above) the labour system in the 19th century separated the different ethnic groups that needed not to compete with other groups over resources. Further, the modern parties in Belize consciously do not enhance ethnic boundaries but rather draw votes from all ethnic groups, in order to succeed at the national level. All of this leads to a process of depoliticzation of ethnicities within Belize. While discrimination of one group by another group leads often to strengthening of communities, the lack of discrimination in Belize leads to the weakening of the ethnic awareness of communities. Since ethnicity is never made public, its significance for local people decreases.

This general Belizean politics had, however, no profound impact upon K'ekchi and Mopan villages, at least not to the degree in influences the Yucatecan culture. The answer to this question probably lies in the history of the Yucatec Maya of Belize. As has been shown

above, the Yuatec Maya are the descendant of refugees from the Caste War that fled from their own people into the formerly British colony. This created probalby a traumatic experience resulting in the loss of any historical memory of the Yucatec in Belize (Colas n.d.). Therefore, the Yucatec M aya, now disassociated with their homeland and culture are less cognizant of their historical roots and cannot use them to define themselves or strengthen an ethnic awareness.

Under these national and local circumstances of a *weakend ethnicity* Pentecostalism was able to rise faster and stronger than in other communites of Mexico where a strong ethnic awareness often hindered the entry of Pentecostalism into villages or severley restricted it. Global phenomena like Pentecostalism only achieve significance within a national and local context. Nations and localitites are never only victims of global phenomena, but they actively reject, accept, or differently use global flows. The national context of Belize with its depolitization of ethnicities and the local context of the Yucatec with the loss of historcial memory facilitated the rise of Pentecostalism and San Antonio villagers embrace new concepts willingly accepting the loss of Yucatecan culture and language.

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